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MIRACLE IN HOTEL BUILDING : BEING THE STORY OF THE BUILDING OF THE NEW CANYON HOTEL IN YELLOWSTONE PARK.

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A Miracle in Hotel Building

Canyon Hotel

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A Miracle in Hotel Building

BEING THE STORY OF
THE BUILDING OF THE
NEW CANYON HOTEL
IN YELLOWSTONE PARK

By J. H. RAFTERY

FULL PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS BY F. J. HAYNES

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THE OLD CANYON HOTEL.

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Yellowstone National Park in Winter

An Order for Nails.

EARLY in January, 1911, in the heart of the Rocky Mountains, eight thousand feet above the sea and nearly forty miles from the nearest railroad, I saw the first "order" prepared on the range of one of the largest and most perfect hotel-kitchens in the world. The "order" was for nails, hot nails, nails by the quart and by the gallon, piping hot, big and little, brads and spikes, ten-pennies and shingle-nails, while from the walls, inside and out, from the sub-cellar below, and from the acres of gaping roof, came the tattoo of the hammers of a hundred carpenters clamoring for nails, hot nails and plenty of 'em.

Through a blinding blizzard, with the wind blowing a horizontal gale of thirty miles an hour, over thirty-seven miles of almost trackless snow, four feet on the level, through mountain gorges, where the drift lay packed from ten to twenty feet, across frozen creeks and rivers, I had come in a horse-drawn sleigh to the brink of the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone River in the National Park to witness the Titanic winter work of building a new half-million dollar hotel, that is to be ready for the summer-tourist by June.

From Mammoth Hot Springs, thirty-seven miles away, where countless herds of elk, deer, mountain-sheep and antelope, driven from the high places by the fury of the winter-storms, gazed at us in meek and unterrified surprise, we set forth in a two-horse sleigh to face the pelting, driven steel-dust of a mountain blizzard. Passing beside the slopes of the steaming waters of the hot springs, and in the pass above the Golden Gate, we met a slinking coyote, bold in starvation and

FORTY-FOOT DRIFT AT HEAD OF GOLDEN GATE

gaunt as a skeleton, heading for the settlement to steal a meal or find a grave.

Cold Weather and Hot Springs.

In exposed reaches of the road the runners ground and squeaked over the bare sand and rocks; in the protected defiles the surface of the thoroughfare was obliterated, lost in piles of flour-dry snow, heaped high against the side-wall of the canyons and sloping away in perilous descent to the bottom of the gorges. Here the big scoop-shovels came in play to open a passage for the team and sleigh, until at length the road descended into the desolate Swan River flat, where the gale swept in unbridled fury across an arctic waste of undulous snow from four to ten feet deep.

For over three miles across the Swan River flats the road had long since been buried, and now the course of it, winding and uncertain, is marked at either side by little pine trees stuck into the snow by the freighters to mark the edges of the obliterated road. A misstep to either side plunges the horses floundering into from four to a dozen feet of snow, for the only footing is the six-inch snow-pack made by the runners of the freight-laden sleds creeping slowly over it in their long and perilous journey from the railroad station at Gardiner to the site of the new Canyon Hotel by the brink of the famous cataract of the Yellowstone.

Sledding Under Difficulties.

Low-pitched, six-horse, cumbrous sled-wagons, manned by stalwart, brave and skilful freighters, grind and crawl over the almost incredible difficulties of this arctic trail. All this winter they have been hauling lumber, hardware, cement, tiling, doors, windows, bath-tubs, tools, machinery, supplies for men and horses. Ten million pounds in all they hauled through boreal storms, over snow-jammed passes,

ACROSS SWAN LAKE FLAT

across ice-bound rivers, along the dizzy brinks of narrow cliff-trails, and with the thermometer seldom above zero and ranging down to forty degrees below.

A Task for Titans.

Some task this, to build in a winter wilderness the grand chateau that is to delight the summer holidays of the tourist who visits the Yellowstone National Park during the brief season of its verdant glory. Two hundred and fifty men, hardy, alert, emulous and undaunted, have been fighting with the frost and blizzard, bucking the snow-drifts and freezing their fingers and toes in this far place all winter long, to the end that one of the most remarkable, extensive, beautiful and complete summer-hotels in the world may be ready and running for the approaching season.

There is something in this very task, as I witnessed it, that is in rugged harmony with the titanic proportions, the heroic dimensions, the indescribable majesty of the scenes by which it is surrounded. Down from the divide between the valley of the Yellowstone and the Gardiner rivers, out of the endless aisles of snow-draped towering pines, we crept through the blinding-white snow on a Sunday afternoon. The storm had ceased; the last cloud had disappeared to the north behind the crenelate peaks of the Gallatin range, and the evening sun, in cold but dazzling radiance, was almost touching the high horizon, when our sleigh lurched into view of the new Canyon Hotel.

Hard at Work in Mid-winter.

A January Sunday evening, nearly eight thousand feet above sea-level, the mercury at forty degrees below zero, civilization thirty-seven miles away, across a wilderness of shining, snow-clad mountains, I saw my first glimpse of the new "summer-hotel." Even be-

"SAVAGES RETREAT"—MEETING PLACE HALF WAY BETWEEN MAMMOTH AND NORRIS

fore we had emerged into full view of it, we heard the volleys of clattering hammers, their cadences rising and falling like the scattering reports of muffled musketry. For they worked on Sunday all through the winter, and they reared the walls and roofed them over when their fingers were numb and their breaths froze in their beards; they fumbled through banks of floury snow for the lumber and shingles and sacked cement; and they spent time in the hospital, where the trained nurses thawed out and treated their frost-bitten faces and members. And that is the reason why the first dish served from the newly installed kitchen ranges was hot nails.

For the hauling of a carload of freight each day for the rapid building of the new Canyon Hotel in the Yellowstone National Park, about fifty drivers and two hundred horses were required. When the snow-storms set in with their full winter fury, sleds with a capacity of three and four tons apiece could carry only 2,500 pounds or less. Horses downed in the drifts, loads overturned, sleds broken, harness torn apart, snow-slides and sudden blizzards increased the hardships, the hindrances and the perils of the gigantic task. In our comparatively easy journey through this strange and rigorous scene, we passed snow-covered piles of freight that had been set beside the trail from overloaded sleighs, waiting to be hauled almost piecemeal over miles of nearly insurmountable difficulty.

To Make a Summer Holiday.

The two regiments of men who spent the winter of 1910-11 building this marvelous mountain hotel have been practically isolated from the world for months. They have worked always seven days of the week; they had no saloon or club or theater to beguile their time or bemuse their faculties, and even for the younger, pleasure-loving workers there was no diversion, except the fierce thrill of gliding and coasting on skis over the glacier-like slopes of the desolate amphi-

NEAR CRYSTAL SPRINGS

theatre which surrounded them. There is probably no other like example of hotel-building in history, and the structure which is the result, the scene which it civilizes without desecrating, the strange region which it adorns without vulgarizing are all in keeping and in singular symmetry.

A Unique Hotel.

Unity without harshness, great size without ostentation, strike the beholder with his first view of the new Canyon Hotel. Without yielding anything of its own well-contained individuality, its surrender to the vast nobility of the scene in which it is placed, is complete, natural and captivating. Not of great height, of uniformly warm, bright color, never in ornate competition with the landscape about it, expressive of repose and strength, innocent of fantastic pretense or ornate frivolity, the new hotel by the Yellowstone in the National Park is an architectural triumph of singular and striking symmetry with its natural environs.

The even apex of its rambling roof-line is always uniformly horizontal, and yet the base-lines of the foundation cling faithfully to the eventful contour of the mountain-slope in lines of uneven and yet beautiful symmetry which suggest that the architect esteemed obedience to and sympathy with the master landscape gardening of Nature herself.

HALF WAY BETWEEN NORRIS AND CANYON

In Harmony With Nature.

When the summer days have come, and you wish to survey this oddly splendid structure, take a walk around it close to the foundation walls. The distance is exactly a mile; and yet the highest lift of the building is not greater than the roof-tree of the fourth floor. In every aspect of the great structure you will find a thoughtful, even respectful conformity with the voiceless demands of the scene about it. It is something to build within the nation's famous wonderland any kind of a house that detracts nothing from the noble majesty of the surroundings; but to have

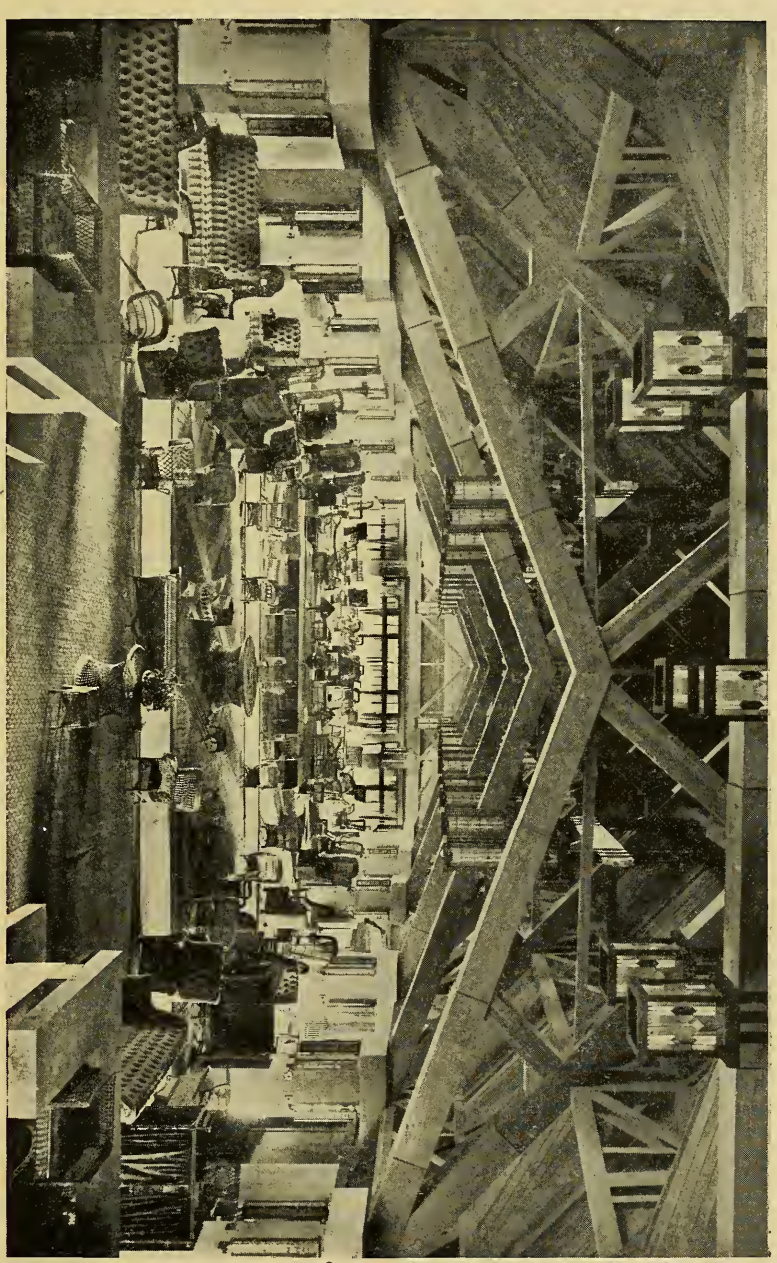
reared so vast and beautiful a hotel and, in so doing, to have enhanced instead of minimizing the splendor of the view and the winsomeness of the place, is to have performed a work of genius.

Rustic it is not, in the sense that Old Faithful Inn is rustic; and yet the new Canyon Hotel of the Yellowstone contains in its structural lines, in the interior details, an insistent and yet unobtrusive suggestion of primeval arboreal strength and beauty that is gently expressive of the forest fastnesses of pine trees that crowd the valleys and crown the summits of the neighboring region. Architect Robert C. Reamer, who also contrived and constructed the historic Old Faithful Inn, smiled gravely when I commented upon this impressive feature of his latest and greatest work, saying: "I built it in keeping with the place where it stands. Nobody could improve upon that. To be at discord with the landscape, would be almost a crime. To try to improve upon it, would be an impertinence."

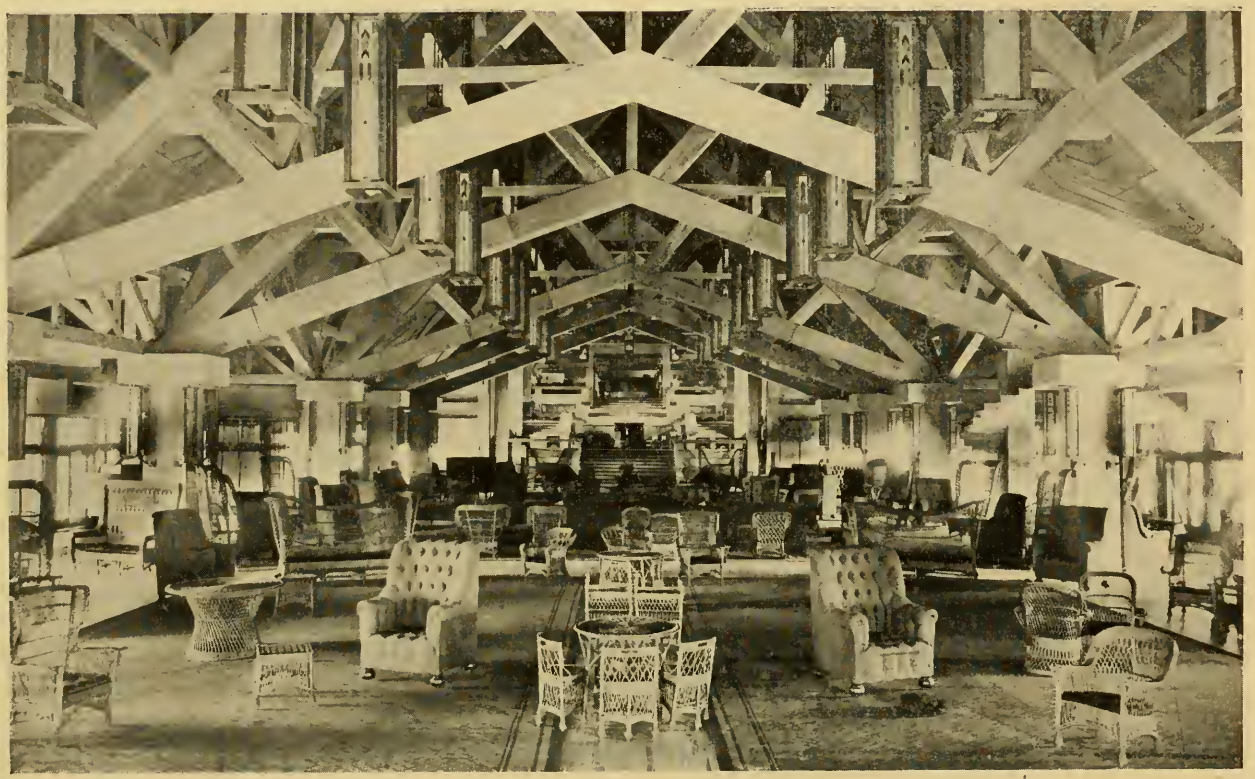
Ideas Sought Afar.

Months of travel in the pleasure places of Europe and the great tourist resorts of America gave to Architect Reamer and to the projectors of the new Canyon Hotel many new and practical suggestions which have made surely for the composite simplicity and utilitarian scope of the edifice. In the course of these far-spread visits of inspection, it was found, for instance, that hotel guests, as a rule, are not apt for those small apartments which comprise seclusion as well as elegant convenience. The writing-rooms, the reading-rooms, the Turkish smoking-rooms, were found to be less attractive to the average tourist than the great lobbies, where to see and be seen, to witness the proud pageantry of the guests in promenade, to study character and apparel, to gossip and to listen to the music, seemed the sum and crown of the desires of the pleasure-loving guests.

HAULING THE 8,000 POUND GENERATOR



THE LOUNGE FROM LOBBY STEPS



THE LOUNGE LOOKING TOWARD LOBBY

This is a beautiful room

To eliminate the superfluous, because unused public apartments of the conventional tourist hotel, prompted the builders of the New Canyon to combine the beauty, the convenience, the utility, the attractiveness of them all into one great common-room. The combined allurement and practicality of the winter-gardens of the famous spas of Europe, were kept in mind; the "peacock walks" of New York's most fashionable hostelries, the need of a great dancing-floor, a convention-hall, a spacious concert-room, recesses for writing, reading, smoking, reviewing the pageant—all of these usually scattered essentials of a modern tourist-hotel were combined in The Lounge, the salient feature of the new Canyon Hotel and one of the most remarkable apartments in the world.

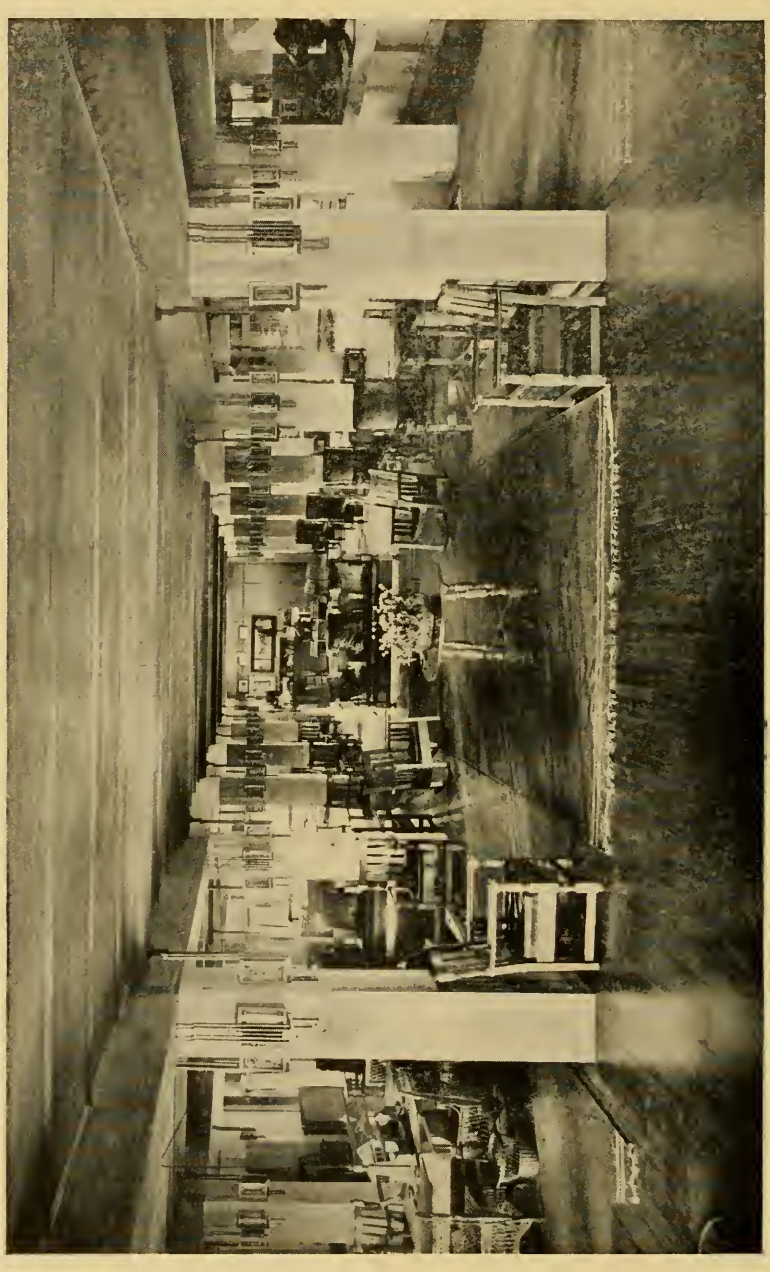
The "Lounge."

This great room is two hundred feet long and one hundred feet wide, its great floor of polished oak and its walls and ceiling of finely finished red birch. Except for the massive alternating pillars that sustain the broad, high roof, the walls of this huge room are almost wholly of French plate-glass. It extends lengthwise from the south front of the hotel building, and from its middle at either side, facing east and west, are two spacious, pillared porches, opening through wide doors and French windows onto the main level of the floor of The Lounge interior. The north end of this Lounge contains the stage, or platform, for the orchestra, flanked by wide, grand staircases which lead, back of the stage, through a broad open space, into the spacious lobby of the hotel proper.

Nothing Like It in Europe.

The Lounge of the new Canyon Hotel in the Yellowstone National Park promises to become a famous favorite with the pleasure-seeking travelers of the world. I think there is nothing like it in Europe; certainly it has no counterpart in America for size, magnificence, spectacular impressiveness and practical comfort combined. You must understand that it projects two hundred feet from the southern front of the great hotel of which it is an essential part and feature. Its one high story, whose vast even floor is a few feet below the level of the hotel's main floor, comprises all of the utilities that are offered, all of the private elegances that are provided in the scattered, small, isolated and, usually, stuffy, small apartments commonly provided by other great hotels. From the open brink of the hotel-lobby floor, the eye ranges above the stage upon which the orchestra will sit, across the fine perspective to the southern windows of The Lounge and thence across the descending landscape to where the Yellowstone Falls, itself masked by an intervening pine wood, roars and thunders in its final descent into the most astoundingly picturesque gorge in the world.

The whole central floor-space of The Lounge is at once a vast ballroom, promenade, auditorium or theatorium. In the pillar-spaced intervals around the open margins of the enormous room, lighted by



THE LOBBY

the continuous walls of plate-glass by day, and by two thousand electric lights by night, writing-desks and tea-tables, easy-chairs, divans, footstools and rugs will offer to the guests the perfection of privacy with accessibility, comfort with elegance, aloofness with sociability, in exactly that degree which each guest of the hotel may choose for himself. The music, the spectacle of the dancers and promenaders, the stir and interest of the summer-night throng, will become unobtrusive, impersonal, an impression rather than an interruption, in the bigness, the roominess, the cosy out-of-doorness which are peculiarly characteristic to this most extraordinary apartment.

Recreation in All Forms.

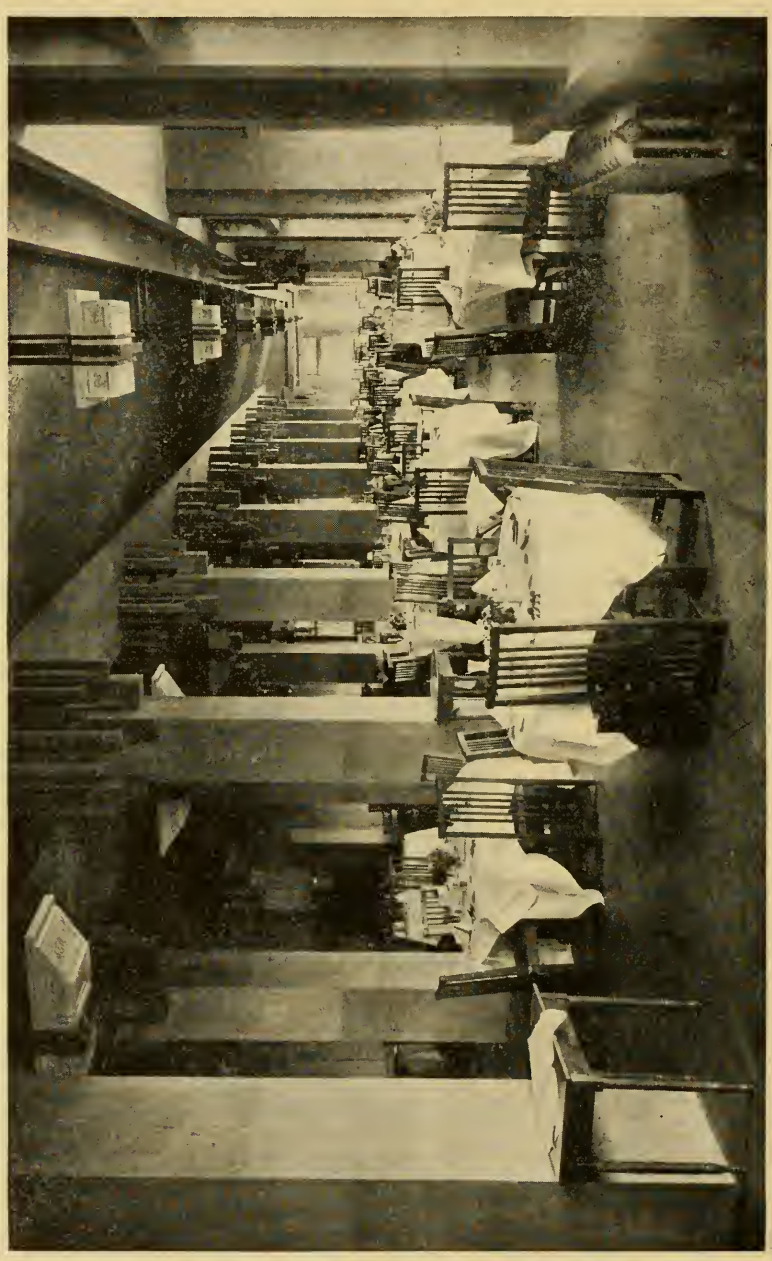
On the projecting side porches of The Lounge, al fresco equipments will be provided, and there, as in the interior, tea, coffee and other refreshments will be served to the loungers and smokers. The basement of this unique room is to be fitted with billiard-rooms, bowling-alleys and buffets for the guests, its several departments being in immediate connection with the commissary, kitchen, wine-cellars and conveniences of the main hotel structure.

The Dining-Room.

The dining-room of the new Canyon Hotel is designed and built upon a scale quite in keeping with the conception of The Lounge, and the wonderful hotel-lobby which connects them, completing the trinity of common-rooms for guests. The splendid refectory is one hundred and seventy-five feet long, extending east and west, sixty feet in uniform width, and with a great bay upon its southern front that is nearly fifty feet in diameter and twenty deep to the plate-glass bow-windows of its front elevation. The interior of this enormous dining-room has been treated in the same manner, as to walls and woodwork, as The Lounge and lobby. Floors of oak, and walls, pillars, doors and casements of red birch. The pillar, transom, chair and linen motive of decoration is the branch of the pine tree conventionalized. This motive, severe but characteristic, is carried out simply and with quiet consistency wherever the need of conservative and yet decorative relief is apparent. It is apparent in the chair-backs, in the shadowy transom-lattice, in the pillar capitals, and even in the margins of the thousands of rugs which are being made exclusively for the new Canyon Hotel.

The Kitchen.

The size of the grand kitchen, its perfection of modern equipment, the estimated extent of its culinary efficiency, might make subject-matter for a small volume in itself. It is one hundred and ninety feet long, fifty feet wide, with concrete floors, tiled wainscot and enamel walls, ceilings and pillars. Extending northward from under the roof of the rest of the hotel, the grand kitchen has its own skylights and ventilation, as has the guests' laundry, which is a further projection of the same section of the structure. Beneath this main



THE DINING-ROOM

See us eating.

equipment of the new Canyon Hotel, in basement and sub-cellar, are the kitchen and laundry for the employees, the boiler and engine room being located in the lowest substructure, based in a great excavation into the rocky side of the mountain.

The Porte-cochere.

The approach and entrance to the hotel are by a sloping, roofed arcade, which, reaching outward from the southern front of the lobby like an outstretched arm of welcome, touches the widened roadway of the grand tour with a great porte-cochere, where, in the summer-time, the trains of tourist-laden coaches will discharge their passengers. From the landing platform, the guests approach the lobby by a gradual, tiled incline, beneath which, and out of sight, is a similar ingress, through which the luggage is to be wheeled to the office in rubber-tired push-carts.

More than one hundred thousand dollars have been expended for the portable furnishment of the hotel, and before the season opens in mid-June, through snow-buried passes, over ice-bound rivers, across wastes of frozen drifts and by the tortuous trails of nearly forty miles of mountain and forest, every item for the use and enjoyment of the traveling public will be in place and ready. Then the arctic desolation of the days of its swift construction will have given way to the incomparable glory of the opulent summer in the Yellowstone National Park; then the fur-wrapped sled-driving freighters will have given way to the happy, gallant reinsmen of the tourists' coach.

The Grand Canyon.

Of all the contrasted and incredibly wonderful regions of the Yellowstone National Park, none clamors so insistently for long days of deliberate inspection as does that incomparable stretch of titanic panorama which reaches from the Yellowstone Lake to the lower abysses of the Grand Canyon. The new Canyon Hotel, the construction of which, amidst the rigors of an arctic winter, I have attempted to describe, is situate in the heart of the most opulently varied landscape in the nation's greatest domain of colossal and portentious wonders. Other portions of the Park may be visited and appreciated in a few days. The scenes about the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone, the wildest, oddest, most awesome and most grippingly beautiful combinations of majesty with tenderness, of savage splendor with sylvan loveliness, are scattered here with the most whimsical lavishness that Nature ever displayed.

THURBER CO., HELENA

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